

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 19775

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TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJ: PRESIDENT MARCOS' ARMED FORCES DAY SPEECH

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE SPECULATION THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS MIGHT USE OCCASION OF ARMED FORCES DAY TO REPLACE HIGH LEVEL OFFICERS PAST RETIREMENT AGE, NO CHANGES WERE ANNOUNCED. MARCOS' ARMED FORCES DAY SPEECH WAS MORE EXHORTATIVE THAN SUBSTANTIVE. HE PRAISED THE ROLE OF THE AFP UNDER MARTIAL LAW AND CALLED FOR CONTINUED VIGILANCE AGAINST INSURGENCY THREAT. MARCOS. COMMENTS ON NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN MUSLIM REBELS BEING REPORTED SEPTEL. END SUMMARY.

2. DECEMBER 22 WAS 41ST ANNIVERSARY OF ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES (AFP). OCCASION WAS MARKED BY THE USUAL POMP AND CEREMONY -- PARADES, TROOP REVIEW, AWARD OF MEDALS, AND SPEECH BY PRESIDENT MARCOS. THERE HAD BEEN SPECULATION IN RECENT WEEKS THAT MARCOS MIGHT ANNOUNCE THE LONG-AWAITED REPLACEMENT OF SEVERAL GENERAL OFFICERS PAST THE RETIREMENT AGE, MOST NOTABLY AFP CHIEF OF STAFF ESPINO. (ESPINO IS EXPECTED TO BE REPLACED EVENTUALLY BY PC CHIEF RAMOS, WITH PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY COMMAND CHIEF VER AS THE PRINCIPAL DARK HORSE CANDIDATE.) HOWEVER, MARCOS' SPEECH MADE NO MENTION OF ANY PERSONNEL CHANGES. HIGHLIGHTS OF SPEECH FOLLOW:
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3. PRAISE OF AFP. AS THE OCCASION DEMANDED, MARCOS WAS EFFUSIVE IN HIS PRAISE OF THE AFP. HE SAID THE ARMED FORCES PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW SOCIETY AND LAUDED THEIR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

PLEDGING A RETURN TO POLITICAL NORMALCY, MARCOS WARNED THAT THIS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT STRONG ARMED FORCES TO BACK IT UP.

4. SELF-RELIANCE. THE PRESIDENT STRESSED THE CONTINUING NEED FOR SELF RELIANCE, ESPECIALLY IN LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR THE AFP.

5. LEFTIST INSURGENCY. MARCOS SAID LEFTIST INSURGENCY "HAS BEEN REDUCED TO INSIGNIFICANCE" OVER THE PAST YEAR. HE COMMENDED THE AFP FOR THE CAPTURE OF NPA LEADERS BERNABE BUSCAYNO AND VICTOR CORPUS. HOWEVER, HE WARNED THAT THERE IS NEED FOR CONSTANT VIGILANCE, SINCE THE NPA HAS DEMONSTRATED TIME AND TIME AGAIN A REGENERATIVE CAPACITY, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE RECENT RAID AT MALABACAT, PAMPANGA, IN WHICH NPA REPORTEDLY DISARMED 43 MEMBERS OF THE CIVILIAN HOME DEFENSE FORCES. MARCOS NOTED THAT THE FINAL RESOLUTION OF THE INSURGENCY PROBLEM COULD ONLY COME THROUGH SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS.

6. AT RECEPTION FOR SENIOR OFFICERS AND GUESTS WHICH FOLLOWED CEREMONY, MARCOS ANNOUNCED THE PROMOTION TO TWO STAR RANK OF THE THREE SENIOR SERVICE COMMANDERS NOT YET HOLDING THAT RANK -- BG ABAT (ARMY), COMMODORE OGBINAR (NAVY) AND BG SARMIENTO (AIR FORCE) -- AS WELL AS BG PAZ (J-2). MARCOS ADDED THAT THE PROMOTION LIST FROM COLONEL TO BRIGADIER GENERAL IS NOT YET COMPLETED, BUT WOULD BE ANNOUNCED BEFORE JANUARY 1.

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7. COMMENT: PROMOTION OF SERVICE COMMANDERS COMES AS NO SURPRISE. LACK OF ANY PERSONNEL CHANGES AT SENIOR OFFICER LEVEL IS INDICATIVE OF MARCOS' CONTINUED EXTREME CAUTION VIS A VIS THE MILITARY. WE WILL REPORT PROMOTIONS TO GENERAL OFFICER AS SOON AS THEY ARE FORMALLY ANNOUNCED.
SULLIVAN

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